



USAID | MACEDONIA
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PRESS RELEASE

National Poll Finds Economic Issues Top List of Citizen Concerns

The results of an opinion poll of 1,107 adults in Macedonia, conducted between March 18 and March 23, 2006, indicates that the state of the economy is the most pressing issue for the vast majority of respondents. Currently, 86% of respondents cite unemployment, the economy, and the standard of living as the most important problems facing Macedonia today, a 3% increase since January 2006 when this poll was last conducted. A majority of respondents (52%) point to a lack of employment opportunities as the single most important problem, with an additional 16% citing the economy, and 18% citing a low standard of living as the most pressing problem facing Macedonia.

The opinion survey was carried out by the International Republican Institute (IRI), through an ongoing project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), a part of the U.S. Mission in Macedonia. The actual survey was conducted by the local research supplier Brima, in collaboration with an American research firm, Williams and Associates of Salem, Massachusetts. The results of this poll were presented to representatives of various political parties in Macedonia during the week of April 3rd, 2006.

“As Macedonia prepares for upcoming elections, we hope this information will be useful to representatives of the political parties in developing policies and platforms that respond to the issues on the minds of the citizens of Macedonia,” comments Dick Goldman, Mission Director of USAID in Macedonia.

In response to the survey’s question on what the government’s priority should be after the next elections, a total of 69% of respondents identified issues related to economic development. Of these, 42% considered employment as the top priority, while 22% cited the state of the economy, and 5% viewed standards of living as the most important priority for the government to address.

When asked if Macedonia was moving in the “right” or “wrong” direction, currently 22% of respondents believe things are moving in the right direction. Pessimists now outpace optimists by a margin of 21%, according to the survey.

According to the poll, 87% of respondents continue to believe that foreign investment is a key element in securing Macedonia’s future economic growth. When asked from where the source of foreign investment should come, the majority of respondents (51%) continue to believe that no single source of foreign investment is more desirable than the others. In terms of individual sources of foreign investment, 22% favor Europe, 17% favor the United States, and 3% favor Russia.

Support for Macedonia’s membership in NATO and the EU continues at very high levels, and changes in this survey were slight. Support for entering the European Union rose from 96% to

97%. Support for Macedonia entering NATO is currently at 89% according to the poll, one percentage point lower than the historical high for this response set in the January poll.

The results of the opinion poll are available at www.USAID.org.mk

The American people, through USAID, have invested more than \$450 million in Macedonia since 1993. More than 20 projects worth \$30 million a year are currently being implemented. These projects are designed to support Macedonia's transition to a free market-based, multi-ethnic democracy. They include initiatives to accelerate economic growth, develop democratic institutions, and educate citizens for a modern economy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.

The International Republican Institute (IRI) works with Macedonian political parties to enhance their ability to identify and respond to issues of concern among the electorate and to provide citizens with increased avenues of participation. IRI utilizes public opinion polls to help political parties in issue identification and advocacy, message development, and communications and voter outreach. IRI polls are designed to keep parties grounded in the issues of real concern to the electorate.